

▶ Health

In brief

Champs wanted

CRANSTOWN Community Drug Agency (CDA) is searching for people to sign up to its Blood Borne Virus (BBV) champions project.

The initiative was launched last year by Royal Berkshire Hospital clinical nurse specialist Dean Linzey and offers HIV and Hepatitis C screening tests for people outside of the traditional hospital setting.

No previous healthcare experience is needed and applicants will be expected to promote the project among community groups. There is also a need for speakers of Urdu, Punjabi and other Asian languages to join the project. See www.rvadirectory.org.uk/t/837 to apply.

Taking a big step

DISABILITIES group Stepping Stones is holding a moving-in party at its new home.

The group, that formerly met in the Christchurch Centre, Katesgrove, is hosting the bash from 11am-4pm tomorrow (Friday) in St Agnes Church hall, in Northumberland Avenue, with Valentine's art work, drama, singing and refreshments.

Call 0118 938 0807 or visit the group's new website at www.steppingstonesdayservice.org.uk for details.

Memorial for babies

A MEMORIAL service will be held for parents and families mourning the loss of a baby.

The service takes place from 2pm on Sunday, March 24, at the Royal Berkshire Hospital chapel, near the London Road entrance, and is open to all faiths and none.

Families wishing their baby's name to be read out during

Horse therapy used to treat drug addicts

EXCLUSIVE

A WORLD-LEADING psychotherapist harnessing the bond between horses and humans to treat addiction and mental illnesses insists tackling deep-seated family troubles is crucial in aiding victims' recovery.

Don Lavender was speaking at the Renewal Centre, in Swallowfield, on Monday before hosting a seminar outlining his innovative techniques to treat drug and alcohol dependency, trauma, depression and anxiety.

The American psychotherapist and author, who lives in Spain and runs the Camino Recovery Centre in Malaga, told *The Chronicle* before the meeting: "Often families point the finger at the patient but the whole family needs help in addiction and mental health the whole family system needs change."

Later he told psychology experts and addicts' families assembled in the audience: "Families are involved in addiction and it's appropriate they need a say in confronting it without blame or judgement.

"If you don't provide that care you can work with someone for a month and they will get as well as they can do, but they will head back into the system when they return home."

Mr Lavender outlined his pioneering equine-utilised psychotherapy treatment, a technique he began using with fellow therapists in America in 1989, encouraging patients to interact with horses to overcome deep psychological problems. Patients are urged to

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whisper their thoughts and fears into the animals' ears while they stroke, groom or tend to them, before gaining confidence to lead them around lunge pens and later ride them.

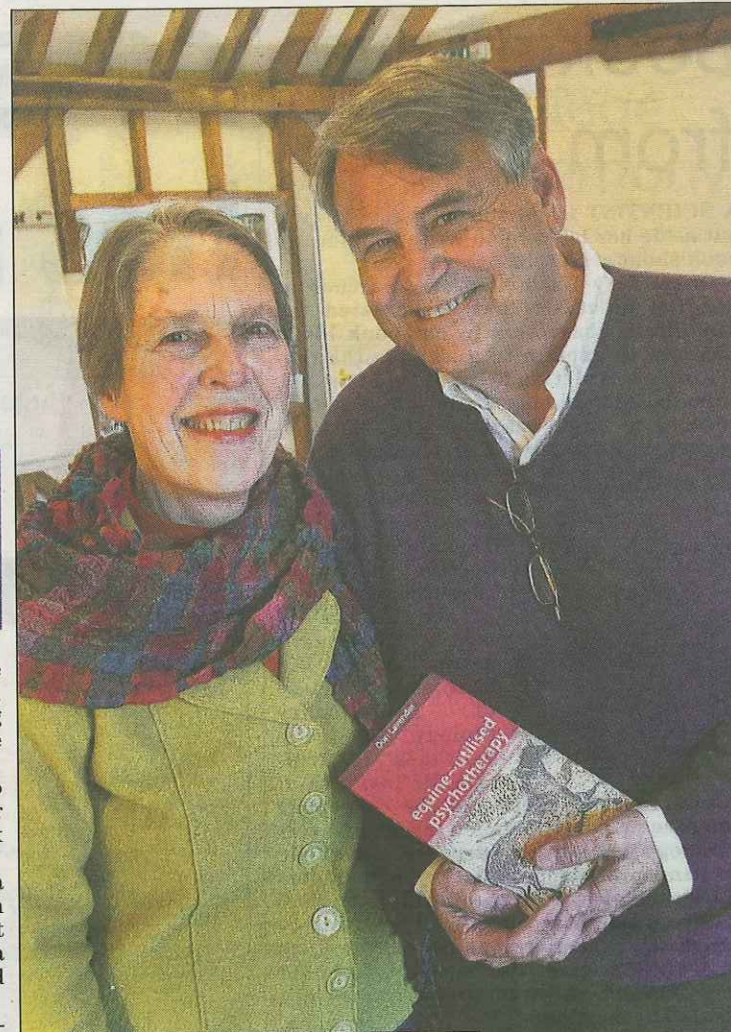
More than 60 people a year undergo the therapy at his centre opting for sessions ranging from a day to six months.

He told *The Chronicle*: "When a human learns to connect with a human there is sometimes an agenda, but horses have no agenda and there is a warmth of connection and safety and healing occurs.

"People in rehab tend to have an isolative behaviour and working with horses allows them to tackle that isolation and reconnect with the self. Whatever you learn to accomplish with the horse can be taken and used in the real world in their relationships."

He added: "It's a fascinatingly therapeutic intervention and we never thought people would take such an interest in it."

Call 0118 988 3242 or email info@renewalcentre.co.uk for details of workshops, courses, seminars group therapy and counselling sessions held at the Renewal Centre.



Innovative approach:

Above, psychotherapist Don Lavender, who uses horses as part of his addiction treatment therapy, with Sally Miller, owner of the Renewal Centre in Swallowfield, where he held a seminar on Monday. Left, Don with one of the horses at the centre. 130657